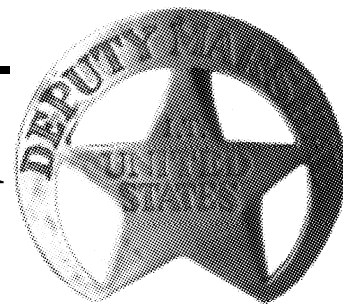


The Dispatch

The Newsletter of Fort Smith National Historic Site



June 2000 Vol. 2 No. 1
Reopening Special Edition

Reopening Schedule of Events

Saturday, June 24, 2000

8:00 a.m. - Morning salute and raising of the colors.

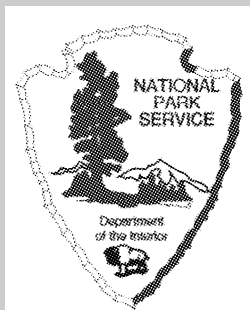
9:00 a.m. - Dedication of the Trail of Tears Overlook and Exhibits.

10:30 a.m. - Western Arkansas Wind Symphony.

11:00 a.m. - Grand Reopening ceremony. The event will take place in front of the south entrance to the historic barracks / courthouse / jail building.

12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. - Visitor Center and Exhibits open to the public.

We hope to see you there!



Almost open for business!

The new visitor center front desk. All we need to do now is to move in.

The Reopening is upon us!

The park will hold the grand reopening of the visitor center in the Historic Barracks / Courthouse / Jail Building on Saturday, June 24, 2000 at 11:00 a.m. The ceremony will include brief presentations by congressional leaders, National Park Service personnel, and area dignitaries. The historic building and park grounds have been undergoing a major \$7.5 million rehabilitation project for the past three years.

The opening ceremony will be preceded by the dedication of the new overlook and educational panels along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. The dedication will take place at 9:00 a.m. on the Arkansas River, below Belle Point. These panels were written and designed with the assistance of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek), Chickasaw, and Seminole tribes. The exhibits were funded by a grant from the National Park Foundation.

At the time of the reopening, a portion of the exhibit area will not yet be completed; the 1888 cellblock reconstruction and exhibits is expected to be finished and open to the public by August.

A Harpers Ferry Center crew arrived on June 5th to begin the installation of exhibits and historic furnishings. Phase III landscaping work will continue throughout the summer. Wayside exhibits to accompany the landscaping are being developed by the ranger staff.

Contact park ranger Julie Northrip for more information about the reopening program.

Superintendent's Column

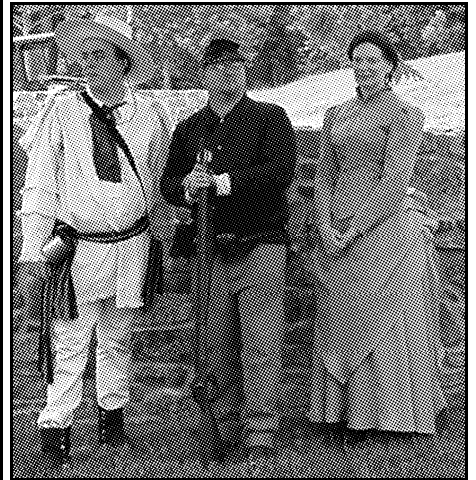
In just a short time we will know if our efforts of the last five years meet with your approval. The building and the new exhibits will reopen on June 24. We will also dedicate the Trail of Tears overlook at 9:00 a.m. that morning; we hope you will find time to attend both ceremonies. Work will continue for several months to complete the landscaping, the administrative offices and library and a few more exhibits, but for the average park visitor we will be back in business.

For those of you who miss my re-opening speech, intentionally or not, I would like to repeat a little of it here. I will obviously thank Senator Bumpers for obtaining the funding for most of the building, and his interest in the project was directly related to the interest and support of numerous individuals and organizations. We had an excellent contractor, Crawford Construction from Fort Smith and their people and the subcontractors should be proud of their efforts. The cooperation of the city of Fort Smith was an integral part of the project as was the support of the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce, especially Vice President Janie Glover, and the Fort Smith Convention and Visitors Bureau under the leadership of former director Dee Carroll. As tax payers, you would be impressed with the performance of the team of architects, engineers and managers at our Denver Service Center who designed and oversaw the construction of the building. They put in many long hours and many of their weekends solving problems and insuring that the building would serve us for decades to come. Former Park Historian Julie Galonska poured her heart into the exhibits insuring that the visitors get a quality experience from their

time in the building. And finally, last but certainly not least is the park staff. Although small in number each one of them has had involvement with some part of the building. Gary Smith and his park crew and historic preservation crew did a lot of construction in the building and grounds and whenever a financial snag was thrown in our way we would just say "let Gary do it." The rangers were involved in all the reviews of the exhibits, getting the bookstore on line, producing the outside interpretive panels in addition to trying to assist the intrepid visitors who braved the construction zone in a futile effort to visit the park. Chuck and Quoya in administration worked double duty taking care of the normal business in addition to all the spot fires that came up. Museum Technician Emily Lovick spent long hot hours monitoring the digging and other ground disturbance in addition to keeping track of our new acquisitions for the exhibits.

In the good news, bad news department: the bad news is that we will have to raise our entrance fee to \$3.00. The good news is that we have permission to waive the fee for two weeks following the grand opening so you all come on down and take advantage of this. It is a good time to remind people that we do not charge for children under 16 and adults over 62 can obtain a Golden Age passport for the one time cost of \$10.00 that provides lifetime free admittance to our National Parks. For those of you taking a western vacation, you might also want to talk to the rangers about passes that will save you money if you are visiting a number of them within one year.

Bill Black



"In Their Own Words" - Park rangers Eric Leonard as Thomas Nuttall, Tom Wing as Pvt. Henry Strong, and Julie Northrip as Mary Rutherford Cravens.

Staff Notes

Kenneth Smith

Preservation crew member Kenneth Smith passed away on March 14, 2000. Starting work at the park in 1980, Kenneth had worked nearly 20 years with the National Park Service. During that time, he worked on projects in almost 20 different park areas, from Cuyohoga Valley in Ohio, to Hubbel Trading Post in Arizona. His years of work are a legacy that many parks and thousands of park visitors have and will continue to enjoy for years to come. On the park staff, Kenneth is survived by his son, Chief of Maintenance Gary Smith and his brother, Preservation Specialist Joe Smith.

Summer Staff

To assist during the summer season, the park has hired the following summer employees: Kevin Stiles to assist Gary's crew in sprucing up the grounds. John Spears has been hired as fee collector to work the front desk. Kevin Kimbrough is back, working both behind the front desk and assisting Emily with the curatorial backlog.

"In Their Own Words"

As a part of Arkansas Heritage Month in May, the park presented a living history program May 19th and 20th. This year's theme for Arkansas Heritage Month was "Homeward Bound: A Migration Story." Three historic persons and time periods from 1819 – 1865 were presented: Thomas Nuttall, Mary Eloise Rutherford Cravens, and Private Henry Strong. The program consisted of first hand accounts of historic Fort Smith impressions and experiences.

Park Ranger Eric Leonard portrayed the noted naturalist Thomas Nuttall who came up the Arkansas River to Fort Smith in 1819 to study the flora and fauna of the region. He spent a great deal of time at the first Fort Smith, and explored the region extensively.

Park Ranger Julie Northrip portrayed Mary Eloise Rutherford Cravens, a young woman living in Fort Smith during the years before the Civil War. In 1862 she married Confederate Lieutenant William Murphy Cravens, later a defense attorney who tried cases against Judge Parker. In her later years she recounted stories of the social life at the fort before the Civil War.

Park Ranger Tom Wing portrayed private Henry A. Strong, of Company K, 12th Kansas Volunteer Infantry, who kept a diary during the period that the company was in Fort Smith. They arrived shortly after Christmas in the year of 1863 and remained at the fort until February 23, 1865. In his diary he details much about the Federal occupation of Fort Smith and his reflections on the town.



Good Shooting! - Fort Smith Park Ranger Eric Leonard; Bob Rahberg, Florida State Parks; Chuck Dale, Castillo De San Marcos NM; Julia Mize, Boston NHP, standing next to their cannon target.



Park Ranger Tom wing firing a 'Brown Bess' flintlock during range day.

Historic Weapons course a booming success!

The park co-hosted the NPS Historic Weapons Safety training at Fort Chaffee Maneuver Training Center April 3-14, 2000. Sixty trainees attended, representing national parks such as Fort Clatsop NM, Ninety-Six NHS, Colonial NHP, Horseshoe Bend NMP, as well as Texas and Florida state parks. Superintendent Bill Black was instrumental in getting the course held locally. Former park staff member Rick Martin returned as the course coordinator and a 18th century instructor.

Graduates of the Historic Weapons Safety Course supervise the demonstrators and volunteers at their parks. Every four years the Historic Weapons supervisors must re-certify to stay current in their certifications. Park Rangers Eric Leonard and Tom Wing attended the course this year; Tom certified in 18th Century small arms and artillery and Eric in 19th Century small arms and artillery. Darin Huggins achieved his certification at the course two years ago.

The park hosted a barbeque dinner for the entire class, and Tom, Eric, Darin, and Julie led tours through the building and around the site. Fort Smith Mayor Ray Baker also made an appearance, declaring April 3-14 "Historic Weapons Days" in Fort Smith. From all indications, the mayor's visit and the tour of the park made quite an impression on the class.

Notes on Fort Smith History

June 21, 1819

Thomas Nuttall, British naturalist, returns to Belle Point after journeying to the Red River. He spent a month resting at the fort before continuing his travels in the area.

Nuttall described the inhabitants of the Red River valley as being of "the worst moral character imaginable, being many of them renegades from justice, and such as have forfeited the esteem of civilized society."

June 28, 1858

A sale of all Quartermaster property (except horseshoes) at Fort Smith was planned for this day, to prepare for the scheduled abandonment of the post.

The sale and closure of the fort was cancelled when the decision was made to garrison the 1st Cavalry at the post.

June 24, 1865

In the previous week, three steamboats (the *Farragut*, the *Alamo*, and the *Mattie Cabler*) had arrived and departed Fort Smith. At the end of the week the Arkansas River had fallen to a point where it was closed to navigation. A unexpected rise in the river allowed boat traffic to reach Fort Smith through July 8th.

June 26, 1885

James Arcine and William Parchmeal were executed for the murder of Henry Feigel. Traveling in the Cherokee Nation in 1872, Feigel was overtaken by Arcine and Parchmeal; they killed and robbed him, taking his clothing and 25 cents. Thirteen years passed before a diligent deputy was able to gather enough evidence for an arrest. Both men confessed to the crime on the gallows.

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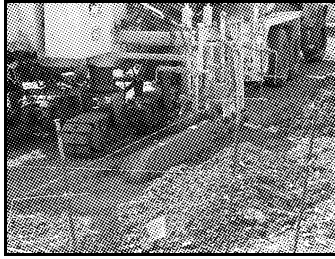
The newsletter of Fort Smith NHS

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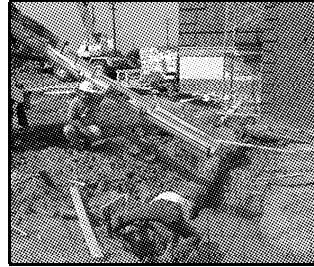
Park Staff

Bill Black - Superintendent
Chuck Shoemake - Administrative Officer
Quoya Waters - Administrative Assistant
Emily Lovick - Museum Technician
Gary Smith - Chief of Maintenance
Tom Wilhite - Maintenance Mechanic
Darin Huggins - Maintenance Mechanic
Bambi Hamilton - Gardener
Joe Smith - Maintenance Mechanic
Gary Montag - Maintenance Mechanic
Carl Hickey - Maintenance Mechanic
Billy Bars - Maintenance Mechanic
Linda Richards - Maintenance Mechanic
Kevin Stiles - Gardener
Trenton Bailey - Maintenance Worker
Tom Wing - Park Ranger
Eric Leonard - Park Ranger
Julie Northrip - Park Ranger
Kevin Kimbrough - Park Ranger
John Spears - Fee Collector

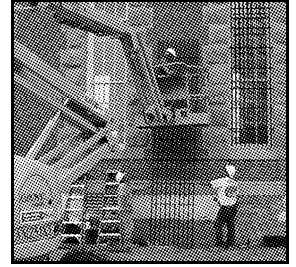
Renovation Project Pictures



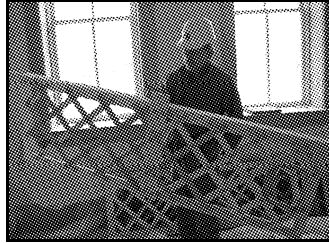
Ask Bill to tell you what this machine does...



Kevin of the Crawford crew supervising the pouring of concrete.



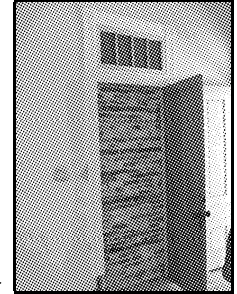
Installing the bars on the windows of the new jail.



Chuck picking up one of the wooden cell doors for the cellblock reconstruction.



Above- Looking through the cage of the cellblock reconstruction. Right - Surprise! Door to the Clerk's Office area from the courtroom.



For more information on the renovation project, and photographs showing nearly two years of progress, check out the park's web site at <http://www.nps.gov/fosm/park/project/>

Fort Smith National Historic Site
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